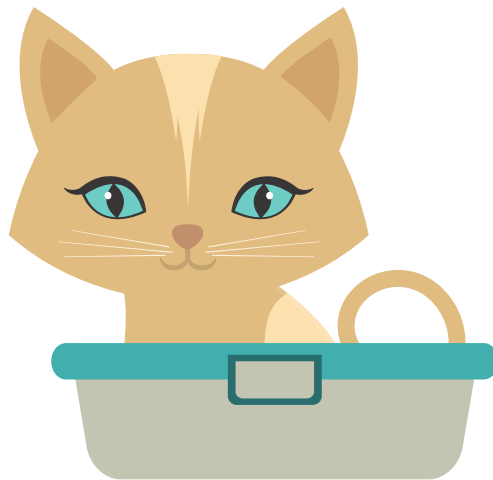




Humane Society  
of SKAGIT VALLEY



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HSSV  
**FOSTER MANUAL**

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Orphaned Kittens

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# HSSV FOSTER MANUAL ORPHANED KITTENS

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## Foster Care Phone:

360.757.0445

[foster@skagithumane.org](mailto:foster@skagithumane.org)

Mon-Fri 11:00-5:00, Sat & Sun 11:00-4:00

Humane Society of Skagit Valley

18841 Kelleher Road

Burlington, WA 98233

**Animals returning for adoption come back on Wednesdays and Thursdays**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                            |    |
|--------------------------------------------|----|
| COMMITMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.....      | 2  |
| SUPPLIES YOU WILL NEED.....                | 3  |
| DISEASE PREVENTION.....                    | 3  |
| WHAT MAKES BOTTLE FEEDERS SO SPECIAL ..... | 4  |
| CONFINEMENT AND SAFETY.....                | 4  |
| KEEPING YOUR KITTENS WARM .....            | 5  |
| MONITORING HEALTH.....                     | 5  |
| SOCIALIZATION.....                         | 5  |
| FEEDING AMOUNTS.....                       | 7  |
| WHAT FORMULA DO I USE .....                | 7  |
| BOTTLE BABIES – IT'S TIME TO EAT! .....    | 8  |
| RECAP ON BOTTLE FEEDING .....              | 8  |
| WEANING YOUR KITTEN.....                   | 9  |
| ALL ABOUT PEE AND POOP.....                | 10 |
| INTRODUCING THE LITTER BOX.....            | 11 |
| BATH TIME! .....                           | 12 |
| WHAT TO WATCH FOR AND WHEN TO CALL.....    | 13 |
| EMERGENCIES.....                           | 14 |

# HSSV FOSTER MANUAL ORPHANED KITTENS

## COMMITMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### Estimated Time Commitment

| Type of Foster               | Total Wks Involved | Volunteer Hrs (Daily) |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Bottle fed kittens (0-4 wks) | 4 - 9 Weeks        | 6 hours               |
| Weaned kittens (4-8 wks)     | 1 - 6 Weeks        | 4 hours               |
| Mom w/kittens                | 1 - 9 Weeks        | 3 hours               |
| Weaned puppies (4-8 wks)     | 1 - 5 Weeks        | 5 hours               |
| Mom w/puppies                | 1- 9 Weeks         | 4 hours               |
| Bottle fed puppies (0-4 wks) | 4 - 9 Weeks        | 6 hours               |
| Single kitten/puppy          | 1 - 9 Weeks        | 3 hours               |
| Medical Dog/Cat              | 1 - 3 Weeks        | 2 hours               |
| Injury Dog/Cat               | 1 - 3 Weeks        | 2 hours               |
| Socialize Dog                | 1 - 3 Weeks        | 3 hours               |

You can expect to have to return to HSSV for the following appointments:

- 4 weeks of age - exam/worming/vaccinations
- 6 weeks of age - exam/vaccinations
- 8 weeks of age - PUFA (put up for adoption) and Spay/Neuter
- Emergency health exams

Additional time may be required to transport foster animals to HSSV for regular treatments or to pick up medications to administer at home.

### Financial Commitment

HSSV will provide you with a 24 hour supply of food, bedding, and other immediate needs. You will need to provide for the animals ongoing needs until returned to HSSV. This may include formula, wet & dry food, litter, bedding, toys, etc.

Our funding is limited to basic supplies and not for outside veterinary care. If you choose to take your foster pet to your own veterinarian or an emergency clinic, HSSV will not be able to reimburse you.



**NOTE: Foster families get first choice to adopt!**

## HSSV FOSTER MANUAL ORPHANED KITTENS

### SUPPLIES YOU WILL NEED



1. **Cat carrier** - plastic is the easiest to clean
2. **KMR (Kitten Milk Replacement)**- Liquid or powdered
3. **Fleece** - great for bedding, dry quickly
4. **Heating Pad** - specially designed for animals
5. **Washcloths and towels** -have washcloths and towels you use for your foster animals ONLY
6. **Cat/kitten food:**
  - **Canned**- turkey, mixed grill, or chicken flavored pate is best for kittens. NO FISH FLAVORS
  - **Dry Kibble** - NutriSource kitten or Royal Canin Babycat (we feed nursing moms kitten food as well because it provides more nutrients than adult cat food
  - **Baby food** - chicken or turkey flavored baby food (step 1) is great for slurry and to stimulate a kittens appetite
7. **Ceramic or stainless steel dishes** - one for water, one for dry kibble, and one for wet food. NO PLASTIC DISHES PLEASE
8. **Litterboxes** -use a cookie sheet or low sided cardboard box for young kittens (3-4wks). Use a regular litterbox with 2" sides for mom cats and older kittens.
9. **Non-clumping clay litter** - Non scented is best, NO CLUMPING LITTER
10. **Nature's Miracle** -excellent at removing stains and odors
11. **Cleaning supplies**, including household bleach

### DISEASE PREVENTION



Not only are many diseases that dogs and puppies contagious to the other animal's in your home, they can carry diseases that are communicable to humans as well. To prevent the spread of these diseases (giardia, coccidia, ringworm, ect), we ask that you wash your hands after handling your foster animals. Make sure to keep foster animals separate from your personal pets to limit exposure to possible diseases.

Wash your foster animals linens separately from the rest of your laundry. Bedding, clothing, towels, washcloths, and linens should always be washed with laundry detergent and bleach. The foster animals' area should be sanitized using a bleach water solution (1/4 cup of bleach to 8 cups water) before you bring home your next foster animals.

*Fostering Saves Lives!*



## WHAT MAKES BOTTLE FEEDERS SO SPECIAL



It takes a strong person to take home a litter of newborn babies. These fragile babies need round the clock care, which includes getting up throughout the night. Because neonatal puppies are completely helpless, it is the foster parent's role to be the surrogate mommy.

Bottle feeding, temperature control, stimulating them to potty, socializing, grooming and love are all essential needs you will have to fulfill. These babies may take up only a tiny spot in your home, but they take lots of time, patience, and energy. We never know why these puppies came to a shelter in the first place (mom hit by a car; mom rejected them) you can expect a 50% mortality rate. You should be emotionally prepared for the loss if you are working with bottle feeders.

The addition of new babies also includes all of their supplies. Make sure to reserve space in your fridge dedicated to bottles, formula, and baby food. The younger the litter, the more supplies they need. They also bring extra loads of laundry and dishes. Be sure you are up for the extra work before committing to a litter.

## CONFINEMENT & SAFETY

Your foster animals should be kept in a quiet area of the home; preferably one that is closed off and easy to clean (laundry rooms are great!). Place a clean box or crate bottom in the space and fill it with a 2 inch layer of bedding. This will become the nest. The box should be large enough for the litter to comfortably fit but not so large that they can't huddle for warmth. The sides need to be high enough to prevent the puppies from rolling out or wandering off, but low enough that a mom will have an easy time getting in or out. **HINT: A box should never be put directly on a cement surface as it draws out the heat.**



# HSSV FOSTER MANUAL ORPHANED KITTENS

## KEEPING YOUR KITTENS WARM

If you have a litter with no mom, it is your job as a foster parent to make sure the kittens are maintaining a body temperature of 99-102 degrees. Until kittens are 4 weeks old, they cannot regulate their body temperature causing them to get cold or overheat very quickly. Kittens need an additional heat source until they have reached 4-5 weeks old.

Animal safe heating pads are recommended. To prevent kittens from direct exposure to the heat, make sure the heat pad is covered. Also, make sure the cord is in a place where the kittens aren't able to chew on it. You can place a digital thermometer in the bedding to monitor the temperature of their environment. Make sure their bedding is kept clean and dry. Wet bedding reduces the temperature very quickly.

If you have a litter of kittens, they will also pig-pile to keep warm. If you have a single kitten, you will need to provide a stuffed animal to snuggle with. We highly recommend a Snuggle Kitty.. These are stuffed animals that have a pouch to hold a small warming bag as well as a battery operated "heart" to mimic a mother's heartbeat. They are available to purchase at most pet stores. They are wonderful for young kittens because they are able to cuddle, stay warm, and relax to the sound of a beating heart.



## MONITORING HEALTH

It is important to monitor the health of kittens on a daily basis. Observe kittens eating habits. While it is rare, sometimes orphaned kittens under the age of 4 weeks will attempt to nurse on siblings. If it is continuous, separating the kittens may be necessary.

If weaned, be sure that each kitten gets a fair share of the slurry and dry food. If one is getting bullied, feed them separately. If possible, check the kittens' weight on a weekly basis. Kittens should gain approximately 4 oz a week. Monitor cat/kitten(s) stool. Diarrhea can be a sign of parasites, stress, or illness so it is important to note any changes in their stool. Look for any signs of Upper Respiratory Infection (U.R.I.); sneezing, crusty eyes, discharge from nose, or labored breathing. If you notice any of these symptoms, we will want to start the litter on antibiotics. Call the Foster Care office to schedule an appointment.

## SOCIALIZATION

While it is very important to make sure orphaned kittens get proper socialization, we want to do it in a manner that does not affect the development of the animals. Orphaned kittens do require more handling since you are the surrogate mom. Regular petting, cleaning, and feeding are necessary to help with their socialization. While cuddling and interacting with these kittens is very beneficial, you do want to allow them time to rest. Kittens need sleep to grow and build up their immune system. If they are regularly woken to be handled, it can stress their immune system and cause them to get sick. So, make sure to allow them "rest" periods throughout the day where no one is allowed to handle them.



**HSSV FOSTER MANUAL  
ORPHANED KITTENS**

# FEEDING AMOUNTS

Feeding will vary depending on the stage the kittens are at, as well as whether there is a mom cat with the litter. Mom cats with kittens under 4 weeks old will typically provide the kittens with their feedings. In this case, you just want to make sure the mom is getting enough food to produce the milk necessary for her kittens. You will want to have an unlimited amount of dry food and water available to her. On top of dry food, you will want to feed her wet food 3 times a day (about ½ can per feeding).

If kittens are bottle feeders or orphaned, or, if Mom is not providing all the milk needed, you may need to provide supplemental or all of their feedings. Below is a chart of how often a kitten should eat and the type of food needed dependent on their age.

| Age       | Type of Food   | Amt per Day<br>(Depending on size) | How Often                     |
|-----------|----------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 0-1 wk    | Formula        | 2 Tbsp                             | Every 3 hrs (2X @ night)      |
| 2 wks     | Formula        | 3-4 Tbsp                           | Every 3 -4 hrs (once @ night) |
| 3 wks     | Formula        | 5-6 Tbsp                           | Every 4 - 5 hrs               |
| 4 wks     | Formula/Slurry | 7 Tbsp                             | Every 5 - 6 hrs               |
| 5 wks     | Dry/Wet Food   | 1/4 can wet, unlimited dry         | 3 -4 times daily              |
| 6 wks     | Dry/Wet Food   | 1/4 can wet, unlimited dry         | 3 times daily                 |
| 7 - 8 wks | Dry/Wet Food   | 1/4 can wet, unlimited dry         | 2 times daily                 |

Kittens are bottle fed until they are 4 -5 wks. Weaning starts at 4 weeks of age. Follow the process for bottle feeding and weaning listed on the following pages.

### What formula to use, if needed:

HSSV recommends KMR, Kitten Milk Replacement, for foster kittens. KMR is offered in both a liquid and powder version. The liquid version is ready mixed and great for “on-the-go” care. The powder version is less expensive and keeps longer. Both versions are available at most pet stores. HINT: If you are using the powder version and have a well system, we recommend using bottled water to mix it. There are chemicals in well water that can cause kittens to get diarrhea.





## HSSV FOSTER MANUAL ORPHANED KITTENS

# BOTTLE BABIES - IT'S TIME TO EAT!



Heat the KMR in a microwave safe dish and pour into a bottle or put the prepared bottle in a glass of warm water until the formula is warm. Test the temperature of the formula on your wrist to make sure it is warm, **NOT** hot, before you begin bottle feeding. Place a towel over your lap. You can wrap the kitten in a soft fleece blanket to help maneuver it around. This also helps them feel more secure and protects your hands from their sharp little kitty claws. Sit with your legs crossed and prop the kitten on the upper portion of your leg with his head tilting toward the ceiling (see photo). **Never** feed a kitten on its back as this can cause them to aspirate formula into their lungs causing illness or drowning.

Hold the kitten firmly around the shoulders so he can't back up. Gently place the bottle up to his mouth. You may need to have a drop on the tip so he can smell it. You can also put some on his lips so he can lick it off. Don't be surprised if your kitten turns his nose up at the formula. Remember that even if he never knew his mommy, he will know that rubber thing is **NOT** her.



Squirming and crying during this process is normal. Remember, the kitten is hungry and the only way to tell you is to cry. When the kitten latches on properly, you will see him gulp and swallow. His ears will also twitch when nursing. These are all good signs that your kitten is eating correctly. After a few days, your kitten will be a professional bottle baby and will know exactly what to do. He will let you know he is done eating by letting go of the bottle and turning away. After his tummy is full he will fall asleep or get quiet and calm. Give him a few minutes to sit and then **move on to the "Peeing and Pooping" portion of the manual on page 9.**

## RECAP ON BOTTLE FEEDING

- Kittens will not eat if their body temp is below 95° F, optimal temp is 99-102°F
- Kittens may not latch on right away, be patient
- Never squeeze the bottle or feed
- kittens on their backs. This can cause
- the kitten to aspirate formula which can lead to illness or drowning.
- Kittens must be pottied after eating.
- Call the Foster Department if you have questions or concerns 360.755-0445



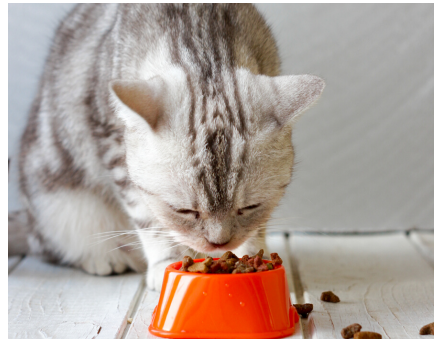
## WEANING YOUR KITTEN

### Formula to Slurry

When your kitten is approximately 4 weeks old, you can introduce them to slurry (a mixture of pate wet food and formula). You will want to make the mixture the consistency of wet oatmeal and serve it in a low sided ceramic or stainless steel dish. Start by putting a little slurry on your finger and hold it up to the kitten's lips to encourage him to lick it off. You can slowly lower your finger towards the dish of food. He may sniff it or stick his face in it. Don't be discouraged if he chooses not to eat. Give him time and try again later. This process can take a couple of days before he chooses to eat. Kittens are very messy when first learning to eat. Don't be surprised if they walk through it and smear it all around. This is why it is important to clean them with a warm washcloth after every feeding. This removes the food bits and prevents bacteria build up and hair loss.

### Kitten Kibble

Once your kitten gets the hang of eating real food, you can slowly discontinue mixing it with slurry (usually when the kitten is between 5 and 6 weeks of age). You can start leaving a low dish of dry kibble out when the kitten is 4 weeks of age. You will also want to have a shallow dish of water out at all times when kittens hit this phase of weaning. For 4 week old kittens we provide Royal Canin BabyCat because it is tiny kibble easy for young kittens to eat. At 6 weeks of age, kittens should be eating regular kitten food and drinking water by themselves.



## FEEDING TIPS

- Feed mom cats dry kitten food. It has more nutrients she needs during nursing
- DO NOT use fish flavored wet food. It is too rich for kittens systems and can cause digestive issues
- Always use shallow dishes for kittens under 6 weeks old. Deep dishes present a drowning hazard
- Change water and wash bowls regularly to prevent bacterial build up
- Watch kittens and mom cats during feeding times to ensure everyone is eating





# HSSV FOSTER MANUAL ORPHANED KITTENS

## ALL ABOUT PEE & POOP

### Stimulating

If you have a mom cat, she will take care of pottying her kittens. If you are the surrogate mom, you will have to do it for the kittens. Start by laying a towel across your lap. Gently hold the kitten to keep it from crawling away. Using a warm, soft cloth or cotton ball, gently rub the genital region. It is normal for a kitten to fight or cry out. Most kittens will pee pretty quickly. You will notice the cloth or cotton ball turn yellow and get warmer from the urine. This should be done after every feeding.



Kittens also need to be stimulated to poop. They may be tiny but they produce a lot of waste! It can be helpful to start the stimulation process by making small circles on their lower abdomen helping move the waste down. Then move to rubbing the genital region. Kittens should poop at least once a day. Feces should be firm or soft but formed. Make sure to clean the area completely after pottying. This may require a bath. It is important to get any excess urine or feces washed off to prevent urine burn or infection. **NOTE:** If your kitten's stomach becomes distended (sometimes blue and firm to the touch) and they have not pooped, call the Foster Department as soon as possible.

### Diarrhea

The most common call we get from concerned fosters are about their kittens/mom cats having diarrhea. What do we consider diarrhea? Diarrhea is any stool that has no shape or consistency. There are several causes of diarrhea in kittens/cats:

- Parasites - stools can have a mucus like discharge, requires treatment
- Worming/vaccines - not uncommon to have blood in their stool from the worming, usually clears up within 3 days
- Change of diet - can cause an irritation of the digestive track and can need medication to rectify
- Diseases - can be a sign of serious illness, if also vomiting & lethargic do not wait 3 days to call; bring in immediately

Anytime a kitten has diarrhea for more than three days the Foster Department should be called. It is important to resolve these issues as soon as possible to keep kittens from becoming dehydrated. If you notice your animal is dehydrated and it hasn't been three days since the diarrhea started, call the Foster Department to bring your kitten in for examination.

### Fecal Scoring System



Score 1 - Very hard and dry; requires much effort to expel from body; no residue left on ground when picked up. Often expelled as individual pellets.



Score 2 - Firm, but not hard; should be pliable; segmented appearance; little or no residue left on ground when picked up.



Score 3 - Log-like; little or no segmentation visible; moist surface; leaves residue, but holds form when picked up.



Score 4 - Very moist (soggy); distinct log shape visible; leaves residue and loses form when picked up.




Score 5 - Very moist but has distinct shape; present in piles rather than as distinct logs; leaves residue and loses form when picked up.



Score 6 - Has texture, but no defined shape; occurs as piles or as spots; leaves residue when picked up.



Score 7 - Watery, no texture, flat; occurs as puddles.

 Nestlé PURINA

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VET 1466B-1007

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Only the last 2 images in the above image would be considered diarrhea in a kitten/cat



## HSSV FOSTER MANUAL ORPHANED KITTENS

# INTRODUCING THE LITTER BOX

Teaching your kittens to use the litterbox will likely be the easiest part of being a foster parent. It is a kitten's natural instinct to use a litterbox. Mom cats will usually show their kittens how to do this. If there is no mom cat, you can introduce them to the box as early as 3 weeks old. By 6 weeks old, they will be old pros!

**You should always use non-clumping clay litter for kittens.** Clumping or scoopable litter gets stuck in their toes and fur, produces too much dust for their nasal passages, and if ingested, can get stuck in their stomach or intestines. Tidy Cat makes an inexpensive, non-clumping clay litter. You will want to start 3-4 week old kittens with a low sided litterbox (cookie sheets are great because there is very little lip they need to be able to climb over). Put about 1-2 cups into the box or cookie sheet and place your kitten in it. He may just walk away or begin digging in it naturally. Make sure that the kitten is not eating the litter. They will sometimes eat it or play in it, but not use it. If you notice this, remove the box and try again later.



Once your kitten has used the litterbox for the first time, he will more than likely use it there after. Keeping your kitten in a small area will ensure they find the litterbox easily. Don't be surprised if he has an accident or two while he is learning how to use the box. Make sure to clean the box daily and monitor his stools. When kittens are still young, they tend to not always cover their feces. If your kitten isn't doing this, you need to do it for him. This will encourage him to cover his waste. If you are not stimulating him to potty anymore, it can be hard to monitor his waste. He should be going after meals and when he wakes up.

Once the kitten reaches the 5-6 week age, a deeper sided box can be introduced. Cheap plastic boxes are the best for training because they are low and large enough for kittens to find. They are also easy to spot waste in so can be more regularly cleaned and sanitized. **DO NOT** use covered litterboxes. Many cats feel the same way about covered boxes that we humans feel about porta potties! Who wants to go surrounded by stink?!?!

It is not uncommon for kittens to step in their waste. If your kitten does, simply use a warm washcloth to clean him up. Sometimes the messes take a little more than a washcloth to wipe away. If this is the case, you may need to give them a bath. **Please refer to the "Bathing your kitten" on page 11 of this manual.**

## HSSV FOSTER MANUAL ORPHANED KITTENS

### BATH TIME!

KITTENS ARE MESSY! When kittens get to be 4 weeks old they are notorious for walking through their food bowl, playing in their water, and sleeping in their litterbox. All kittens do this and the only way to keep them clean is by bathing them. If you have a mom cat, she will do her best to help you keep up on the kittens' cleanliness. But even kittens with a mom sometimes need that helping hand!



They will cry and squirm, but when it's all over, you will have a clean (and fresh) ball of fluff! First you will want to assemble the necessary supplies: tear free shampoo, towels, and washcloths. It is helpful to have a 2nd person to help scrub while you hold.

#### **Kittens under 6 weeks of age:**

Hold under a stream of running water (like in the photo above) to bathe. We do this because until they are 6 weeks old they think they can breath under water and will aspirate if they put their face in the water. Use a gentle, tear free shampoo (Johnson's Baby Shampoo is good) to scrub the kitty clean.

Kittens will have A LOT of baths and heavily scented shampoos can irritate their skin.

Once your kitten is washed and rinsed, immediately wrap him in a clean, dry towel. Gently rub him with the towel to get him dry and keep him warm. Once he is sufficiently dry, he can go back to hid bed to snuggle with his littermates or on his heat pad. His body temperature can drop quickly if he is still wet, so make sure he stays in a warm, dry area until thoroughly dry.

#### **Kittens 6 weeks or older:**

Fill you sink with 1-2 inches of warm water, using a few drops of shampoo in the water. Scrub gently being very careful not to get soap or water in his eyes, nose, or mouth. Follow the same drying procedure that was used for younger kittens



## **WHAT TO WATCH FOR AND WHEN TO CALL**

Cats and kittens come into the shelter for a variety of reasons, from a wide range of places where they may have been exposed to parasites, viruses, and other potentially harmful and contagious elements. Part of being a great foster parent is monitoring your foster cats and kittens for the following common conditions that may not have been present at the shelter:

If you see any of the following conditions, please call the Foster Department at 360-757-0445, so we can determine treatment.

- A kitten not eating for twice the time indicated (SEE PAGE 7) Example: Your kitten should eat every 3-4 hours and it has been 8 hours since it has eaten
- A kitten consistently separated from the rest of the litter
- Colored discharge from eyes and/or nose or crusty eyes
- Lethargy
- Fever (temp should be between 99 & 102)
- Fleas or flea dirt (flea dirt looks like ground black pepper)
- Black, cakey dirt in ears (looks like coffee grounds)
- Patches of missing fur
- Rice or spaghetti looking parasite in the stool
- Unusual gait
- Nursing on genitalia
- Diarrhea for more than three days
- Aspirated while feeding
- Dramatic drop in body temp
- Dramatic drop in weight
- Vomiting
- Injured
- Open mouthed breathing
- Mom cat has hard, red, hot or painful mammary glands



**NOTE: For emergency situations, see page 13.**

"THE PEOPLE WHO LOVE AND CARE FOR ANIMALS HAVE  
SOME OF THE BIGGEST HEARTS AROUND."



## HSSV FOSTER MANUAL ORPHANED KITTENS

# EMERGENCIES

The HSSV Foster Department can be reached at 360-757-0445. We are here 7 days a week during these hours:

Monday-Friday 11:00am-5:00pm  
Saturday/Sunday 11:00am-4:00pm

If possible, please call ahead and speak to the Foster Care Manager/Specialist on duty before bringing in your sick or injured animal. If the Foster Care Manager/Specialist is unavailable, ask for the Director of Animal Care, Vet Clinic Manager, or an Animal Care Specialist.

If you think your kitten is in a life-threatening condition, bring it to HSSV anytime between the hours above. You will be asked to leave the kitten/cat at HSSV for assessment. If you need to contact someone outside of shelter hours, please refer to the **Emergency Contact Form** you were given when you completed foster parent orientation. If you have lost this form, please contact us to let us know BEFORE an emergency presents itself. We do not publish the numbers in the manual for the protection of the privacy of our foster team.

Please be aware that our funds and equipment are limited, and euthanasia may be necessary to prevent the animal's suffering.

Our funding is limited to basic supplies and not for outside veterinary care. If you choose to take your foster cat or kitten to your own veterinarian or an emergency clinic, HSSV will not be able to reimburse you.

THANK YOU FOR SAVING LIVES!



Special thanks to NOAH, PAWS, and HSSKC for sharing materials from their foster manuals with HSSV!